keting and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act", 1980;

(b) if so, the details of their demands; and

(c) the reaction of Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) and (b) Some Trade & Industry Assocciation have demanded repeal of the Essential Commodities Act, 1995 on account of changed scenario of the production/supply of essential commodities. However, theer is no demand for repealing of Prevention of Blackmarketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980.

(c) It has been decided not to repeal the Act in the interest of the effective regulatory administration in the sphere of distribution of essential commodities in the community at this stage.

Availability of edible oils

112. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that despite import of edible oils, the availability of edible oils in the Public Distribution System (PDS) has not improved and there has been no relief in prices;

(b) whether Government would experiment with imposing levy procurement of edible oil from importers solely for distribution through PDS at affordable prices; and

(c) since oil seeds crops in Gujarat and elsewhere are threatened with late arrival of monsoons, what contingency measures are contemplated by the authorities to ensure continued supply of edible oils through PDB at stable prices?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) At present, only RBD Palmolein is being supplied to the consumers through PDS. The State Trading Corporation (STC) is the sole canalysing agency nominated by Government for import of edible oils for the Public Distribution System (PDS). STC has been authorised to import 1.5 lakh tonnes of RBD Palmolein during the current financial year 1995-96 for PDS.

(c) The present availability position of imported RBD Palmolein in the country is comfortable. Allocation of imported edible oil is being made in favour of States/UTs on the basis of demand received. All efforts are being made to meet the requirements of the States especially during the ensuing festival season. The prices of imported edible oil supplied through PDS have been kept lower than open market rates.

Rise in India's imports

113. SHRI RAJNI RANJAN SAHU: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India's imports have risen by 45.1% during the current year as compared to last year;

(b) if so, the reasons tehrefor; and

(c) the steps Government propose to take to reduce the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) The import growth during April-May 1995, the latest period for which trade data are available, is estimated at 13.11% in dollar terms.

(b) POL imports during April-May, 1995 indicate an increase of about 16.7%. Non-POL imports estimated at US$ 4053.96 million registered an increase of 35.4%. The increase in non-POL imports is due to the economic recovery underway in the economy and the increase in export linked imports.

(c) One of the objectives of the current reform process is to import greater trans-